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**New Brunswick Human Rights Commission**

# Statement on International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (08/03/19)

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FREDERICTON (CNB) - The following is a statement by Gordon L. Porter, chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 21.

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere..."
-- Eleanor Roosevelt

"As Eleanor Roosevelt suggested in these famous words, local governments have an important role to play in combating racism and fostering equality. They affect their residents at a practical day-to-day level. In turn, citizens tend to be more personally involved in their local governments. So, municipalities are a good place to develop policies and programs and take effective action to counter discrimination and build inclusive, welcoming communities.

"That brings me to one of the newest groups formed to counter racism, the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CMARD). CMARD was formed in 2005 at the instigation of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. It allows municipalities to exchange expertise, develop tools, and co-operate in numerous other ways with cities and groups in Canada and around the world.

"In 2005, the Human Rights Commission called for New Brunswick municipalities to join CMARD, and Saint John took up the challenge in 2007. Saint John endorsed CMARD's 10 common commitments, and agreed to develop and implement a plan of action to counter racism and discrimination. As part of this commitment, the city is establishing an immigrant welcoming centre to help immigrants find the resources they need to settle in Saint John. The Saint John Police Department has also established a closer relationship with UNBSJ and other groups following racial incidents directed at Chinese students.

"While Canada has a well-established system of human rights laws, racism and discrimination continue to raise barriers for individuals and groups. Last year, 13 complaints were filed on the basis of race and colour, and another 12 were filed on the basis of ancestry, place of origin and national origin.

Altogether, these complaints represented 10 per cent of the commission's caseload.

"While the number of complaints may seem small, the impact of racism on individuals and communities should not be underestimated. Racism can divide communities, disempower individuals and entrench historical inequalities. Obviously, it can also undermine efforts to attract and retain immigrants to our cities.

"The Human Rights Commission cannot combat racism alone. Fortunately, there are a number of other organizations that oppose racism. I would like to congratulate Saint John for joining CMARD, and I encourage other municipalities to follow its lead. I also urge New Brunswickers to support the various groups that oppose racism, and help make New Brunswick a place where everyone feels welcome."

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MEDIA CONTACT: Francis Young, Human Rights Officer, New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, 506-453-2301 or 1-888-471-2233.

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